DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 189 796 EC 124 527

AUTHOR Pepper, Floy Childers: Roberson, Mickey
TITLE Group Discussions with the Emotionally Handicapped.
INSTITUTION Multnomah County Intermediate Education District, Portland, Oreg.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 33p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Emotional Disturbances: *Group Discussion: *Group Therapy: *Peer Groups: *Peer Influence

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the use of regularly scheduled classroom group discussions in the treatment of emotionally disturbed (ED) children, to assist them in learning alternative ways of acting and interacting and to move them from feelings of discouragement and negativism to the point where they can effect change in themselves, feel confident in their problem solving abilities, and feel that they belong. Four mistaken goals that ED children pursue are examined, and suggestions are offered on how to recognize them. These mistaken goals include desiring undue attention, power seeking, revenge seeking, and displaying inadequacy in order to be left alone. Group discussions are examined with special reference to the ideas of equality and mutual respect. Other aspects covered include preparing for group discussions, preparing ED students for group discussions, the purposes of group discussions, the teacher's role, leadership, and qualities needed for leaders of group discussions. Techniques for dealing with ED children in group discussions are also offered. (DLS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH THE EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED

Floy Childers Pepper
(Coordinator - Program for the Emotionally Handicapped)
Mickey Roberson
(Instructional and Behavioral Consultant)
Multnomah County Education Service District
220 S. E. 102nd
Portland, Oregon 97216
(503) 255-1841 Ext.116

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Floy Childers Pepper
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED189796

EC124527

The philosophy and background for this presentation is based upon the writings and teachings of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs. Alfred Adler was one of the pioneers in using the class group, and today we find many known educators who advocate group dynamics. Rudolf Dreikurs was the forerunner in the United States in using group discussions for training children to understand behavior and to unite them toward common goals.

In working with the Emotionally Handicapped child in school, we have found the use of regularly scheduled group discussions in the classroom extremely effective in moving the child from feelings of discouragement and negativism to the point where he can effect change in himself, feel confident in his problem-solving abilities, and feel that he does belong as an important member of the group.

In using group discussions with Emotionally Handicapped children in the classroom, it is necessary to understand the underlying philosophy and psychology. It is our belief that a well-trained teacher can effectively carry out group discussions which in turn assists the Emotionally Handicapped child in learning alternative ways of acting and interacting.

Inherent in our framework of working with Emotionally Handicapped children is the concept of <u>belongingness</u>. As a social being,

the child desires to significantly belong. He needs to believe that he is an important member of the group who is recognized for his contributions, value, and positive interaction with the larger group.

A child's behavior can be best understood by the means in which he attempts to find his place. If these means are reflected in troublesome behavior and inappropriate actions, he then has developed mistaken goals, or beliefs, on how to find his place. At this point we have a discouraged youngster, whose actions have convinced him that this is the most effective way that he can belong.

FOUR MISTAKEN GOALS

Dreikurs recognized that discouraged children pursue four "mistaken goals" without being aware of it. It is essential to understand these mistaken goals before we attempt to redirect the Emotionally Handicapped child into a constructive approach to social living. A well behaved and well adjusted child has found his way toward social acceptance by conforming to the order of social structure and by making useful contributions.

Every action of the child has a purpose. His basic aim is to belong and to find his place in the group. He may direct himself toward getting attention, or he may attempt to demonstrate his power. He may seek revenge or display inadequacy in order to be exempted from any task. Stated more simply the four mistaken goals of misbehavior are:

1. Undue Attention - to gain attention, to gain recognition, to get service, to keep others busy, to make others feel sorry.

2. Power Seeking - to prove his power, to defeat adults or to be the boss.
3. Revenge Seeking - to get even or to hurt those who he feels have hurt him... to counterhurt.
4. Display of inadequacy - to display deficiency or inadequacy in order to be left alone. The child wants to avoid his deficiency (real or imagined) from becoming obvious.

Regardless of which of these four goals the emotionally handicapped child adopts, his misbehavior results from the conviction that this way of acting is the most effective way for him to function and to have a place for himself. The child decides for himself without being conscious of the direction of his behavior.

UNDUE ATTENTION

Attention getting is a technique of gaining the teacher's attention and service. It is the child's answer to his view of the adult's obligations to keep busy with him. The child seizes every opportunity to make himself the center of attention in the eyes of others. What the child is really saying is, "I only count when I am being noticed or served."

Dreikurs believed that misbehavior may be either passive or active and may utilize either constructive or destructive methods as well as being useful or useless. He believed that this basic pattern of activity is established early in life and is difficult to change. The four types of behavior patterns as used by Dreikurs are:

1. Active - constructive
2. Active - destructive
3. Passive - constructive
4. Passive - destructive

The choice of method the child decides on depends upon his feeling of being accepted or rejected by groups of people. His antagonism is always expressed in destructive acts. This feeling of belonging or lack of it is a decisive factor for the switch from constructive methods to destructive methods.

Active or passive behavior indicates the amount of courage the child possesses. Passivity is always based on personal discouragement. A passive child will not move in the direction of open warfare. If his antagonism is successfully beaten down, he may be discouraged to the extent that he cannot hope to gain significance as a person.

Similar conclusions may be reached by a child who considers attention-getting or power as essential, and finds himself unable to obtain it. Then he gives up in discouragement and refuses in participation and functioning. In trying to bring about change in behavior, it is relatively easy to change behavior on the attention level or to change a child's destructive methods into constructive ones, but it is extremely difficult to change a passive child into an active one.

Attention getting (goal 1) is the only goal that can be achieved by all four behavior patterns. There are four words that describe the four attention getting patterns, "good", "charmer",nuisance" and "lazy". He thinks he is somebody <u>only</u> if he has constant attention. The secret for parents or teachers lies in the ability to distinguish between <u>due</u> and <u>undue</u> attention. One must step back mentally and observe if the action and response seem out of keeping with the demands

of the situation. If the child is demanding undue attention, avoid yielding to his demands - withdraw or just disappear. However, be sure to give the child attention on your own terms and time.

The techniques most commonly used in dealing with attention getting behavior are: ignoring the behavior, giving attention for positive behaviors, and doing the unexpected.

POWER SEEKING

Power seeking means trying to overcome and control the opposition. Power seeking means defiance. The child is saying, "I belong only when I am in control or am the boss or when I am proving that no one can boss me." There are two words that describes the power seeking child. The first is "rebel" if the child has lots of courage and the second is "lazy" if the child is more passive in his actions. The term "lazy" does not necessarily mean that the child is really lazy - but he is using "lazy behavior" as the weapon to upset the adult in the situation.

Efforts by the adults to "control" the child may lead to a struggle for power. He will argue, cry, contradict, have temper tantrums, masturbate, lie, become stubborn, not talk, and a host of other misbehaviors in order to prove to you that he is the "boss"; that he can do what he wants to do; that he is the stronger; that he doesn't have to do what you want him to do; that he has a right to be "top dog." No conflict can be resolved as long as the adult is afraid of being humiliated, taken advantage of and personally defeated.

Power is the refusal of the child to do what the parent or teacher wants. He feels that to submit is to lose position. It is a mistake to try to overpower a power-drunk child - it's futile. He is defiant and his main goal is to defeat the adult. The important

distinction between the demand for undue attention and the struggle for power is the child's behavior upon correction. If attention is his goal he will stop his disturbing behavior, at least for awhile. If power is his goal, attempts to stop him only intensify his disturbing behavior. It is best to withdraw from the field of battle, do the unexpected and not allow yourself to become engaged in the contest. No one says this is easy!

REVENGE SEEKING

Revenge arises from an intensification of the power contest. The child feels he hasn't any power or place, and in his discouragement, seeks power with revenge as his only means of feeling important. He feels that life is unfair or that he has been treated unfairly. His main goal is to get even, to retaliate, or to counter-hurt. It is best to be aware of his deep discouragemrnt, avoid feeling hurt, and most of all avoid retaliation through punishment. Encourage his positive actions.

Revenge seeking means trying to "get even" and to punish others for a wrong or a hurt (which may be either real or imagined). Desire for revenge can easily overlap one's drive for power. If a child is convinced that he has the right to do whatever he pleases, and anyone who tries to stop him is his enemy, he may decide on revenge. This is the more probable if the adult has responded to his bid for power by punishment; then the child will come to the point of retaliation. These children are inaccessible to reason. Convinced that they are hopelessly disliked and have no chance with the group, they respond with deep distrust to any effort to convince him otherwise. The key word which describes this type of youngster is "vicious." The adult is exposed to all kinds of well-designed provocations.

The child works to set up situations that prove that he is a "no goodnick"-- not worthy of love and respect. He makes it difficult to be convinced that he is worthwhile and can be liked. The revengeful child is saying "I belong only by hurting others as I feel hurt. I cannot be loved." To get even becomes the only way to feel significant.

The child becomes more vicious and counteracts parental and adult resistance by stealing, self abuse, assault, setting fires, and committing more and more destructive acts such as, breaking windows, denting the car with a hammer, or smashing the T.V. The teacher will need to make a special effort to show respect to the child and to herself. She cannot help a revengeful child unless she realizes how much he suffers. It is exactly the hurt he feels which prompts him to hurt others. For this reason, the teacher has to keep in mind, "Will this help the child and/or situation?" It may be difficult to evoke an attitude of understanding and assistance, however it is essential not only for the sake of the child, but for the morale of the entire class. We need to look for ways to help each child. We have to teach children that each one is his brother's keeper.

DISPLAY OF INADEQUACY

A display of inadequacy is used by the child to protect himself against the demands of life. The child employs the cloak of inadequacy in order to be left alone. This behavior may characterize all actions of a child or it may appear only in situations to avoid activities where he feels deficient. The child is saying, "I belong only by convincing others not to expect anything from me. I am unable, I am helpless."

Completely discouraged children give up entirely. The key word is "hopeless". The child will become helpless to avoid any task where he has experienced failure in the past. He uses stupidity as a means of avoiding any effort whatsoever and views himself as "worthless". The teacher needs to stop being discouraged by the "helpless" child and arrange encouraging experiences where he may discover his abilities.

Adults need to convey to the child that he is "good enough" as he is. They need to remove the pressure by being less critical, less fault-finding, and less picky. They need to give the child time to solve problems and to perform at his own speed. They need to allow time for the child to learn a skill so that he can improve his rate of performance.

RECOGNIZING THE FOUR MISTAKEN GOALS

The child cries out through his behavior. Insight into how and why the child behaves as he does can only be attained by understanding the goals he pursues. The ability to recognize the Mistaken Goals can help adults to equalize the inequities that arise in adult-child relationship.

As adults check their first reactions to the child's behavior, they are able to see the intentions of the child's behavior. It is the reaction the adults have at the time the behavior occurs that indicates to them the goal of the child. The child's goal may occasionally vary with circumstances: he may act to attract attention at one moment, and assert his power or seek revenge at another. He may also obtain his goal by different techniques; and conversely, the same behavior pattern may be used for different

purposes. Its dynamics can be generally recognized by the effect it has on others, and by their reaction.

In the same way, response to correction discloses the child's motives. His response to the adults efforts to control him reveal his goal. The child who wants attention stops his disturbance when he receives attention. When he is challenging authority, the adult's desire to have him control his actions only brings about stronger resistance. The child who seeks to get even, may become even more hostile and violent at the adult's attempts to stop his behavior. In other words, the child's reaction to corrective efforts provides clues about the purpose of his behavior.

GOAL 1 - Attention -- Feelings of annoyance may indicate that the child is seeking attention. If the child responds when spoken to and the action stops, usually the goal is attention. (Sort of resembles a fly, you swat at it and it goes away for a time, but eventually comes back and you swat it again.) However, if the action continues after reprimand it may be considered a symptom of a stronger goal.

GOAL 2 - Power -- When adults feel challenged and feel inclined to prove to the child that they can make him do it, they may be sure that the child's goal is power, A request or a reprimand intensifies the behavior. In a power struggle, no interrelationship is too trivial to be used as an opportunity for challenge. Any pressure results in the child's fighting back and showing extreme aggressiveness. Adults who deal with this type of child feel personally challenged and tend to react with the feeling that they will show the child that they can control him.

GOAL 3 - Revenge -- Adults feeling of hurt and resentment are indicative of the goal revenge. The child does things to hurt them. Children who use revenge need to be convinced that they can be liked.

GOAL 4 - Displaying Inadequacy -- When adults feel like saying "I don't know what to do with you" it is usually indicative that the child has sought to impress the adult with his inability so that the child can give up functioning and responsibility. The child impresses the adult with his incapacities and, as a result,

Overcoming the emotionally handicapped child's discouragement is the most common and urgent task for the teacher. In almost all poor performances, be they social or academic, the child expresses his discouragement. Many times a teacher gives up easily when her first attempts in trying a new technique ends in failure. So it is with children who are having difficulty socially and academically.

In order to help emotionally handicapped children, the teacher must use the process of encouragement. It may be difficult for the teacher, but it is essential for her corrective ability that she watches very carefully for every critical, condemning, or disapproving and impatient sign in her reactions. The difficulty lies in the fact that the discouraged emotionally handicapped child is very prone to impart his conviction of inadequacy to the adults. Any deficiency must be met with methods which will not perpetuate or increase it. To avoid this, the adult characteristically throws up his hands in complete despair, and permits the child to withdraw and the teacher retreats.

the teacher must be aware of her contribution to the deterioration of the child's ability. Students who fail, instill in their teacher the anticipation that they will fail again, which in turn, confirms the child's doubt in his ability and hinders his progress.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group discussion is a meeting where the group discusses and makes the decisions concerning the operation of the classroom, discusses the actions and feelings of group members, explores alternatives to help change one's behavior or to increase one's self-esteem and to give encouragement to the group member in the process of making a change. Group discussion is similiar to taking a subject in social living.

Group discussion in the emotionally handicapped youngsters classroom is a necessary procedure. It is the means by which these children can integrate themselves into the class as a unit with status, responsibility, and active voluntary participation. In the best sense it can become an agent of self-understanding and cooperation. The teacher must have the ability to confront the group with what it is doing, and produce feedback. Free, verbal interplay, sensitively handled, is particularly important. The child should be able to give up a part of himself, to reveal himself to others in order for him to see his own behavior in a new light. He must also learn to recognize how he affects others. The group should be a proving ground of helping and encouraging the emotionally handicapped young people to develop normal human relationships, free from anxiety and distortions. The group represents an optimal situation in which to discover

ones own goal, style of life, and to experiement with new and more adequate patterns of life.

The basic cause for conflict is social inequality between individuals and groups. If the social relationship between people is unstable, it inevitably leads to conflict and disharmony. The lack of the ability to get along with others is the basic mistake of our emotionally handicapped youngsters. Equality alone, the foundation of democracy, can provide social harmony, peace and stable social relationships for these young people.

A democratic atmosphere does not imply anarchy and permissiveness; nor can order to established by domination. In our democratic society freedom and order are necessary, and with freedom comes responsibility and concern for the good of the group. Permissiveness invariable leads to anarchy, while force and power often induce rebellion. It is autocratic to force, but democratic to induce compliance.

Equality

Some people equate equality with equal opportunities, with equal rights to vote, and equal rights in education. Our reference to equality refers to social equality, where every person regardless of religion, wealth, education, heritage, physical appearance and age enjoy the same dignity and the same respect as human beings. While many adults will agree with these concepts, they have difficulty accepting a child as an equal, especially an emotionally handicapped youngster. In fact most people believe that what the emotionally handicapped child needs is more external control, more punishment, and more harsh treatment.

To most adults, it seems preposterous to consider any child as an equal. The adult views the child as small in size, limited in physical ability, limited in responsibility, and too unskilled and unsophisticated to be given the stature that equality and respect imply, much less being emotionally disturbed. Lack of qualities or abilities should never deprive a person of respect and of equal voice. Unfortunately, the adult frequently believes that he can maintain this attitude only as long as he is not threatened in his own status. Furthermore, few adults treat the child as they would treat another adult. The mere assumption that children should be treated as their equal is an absurb idea to them.

Cooperation in the democratic classroom is based on consideration for the other's rights and interests while standing up for one's own rights. In such an atmosphere, one does not concern himself with what others do, but must accept responsibility for what he has to do. Neither imposing on others nor letting others impose on him or dictate is the formula for equality.

Mutual Respect

The principle underlying this type of emotionally handicapped classroom implies mutual respect--respect for the dignity of others, and respect for oneself. Mutual respect means treating each member with respect, recognizing the worth of his ideas, accepting his plans and contributions, and also, when necessary, to reject his contributions as being of no value in a particular situation, while at the same time not rejecting the person.

Respect implies that the other person has something to offer as well as the right and the ability to offer it. Mutual respect is based upon acceptance of the equality of human beings, independent of individual differences, of knowledge, information, abilities, and position. (Dreikurs, Grunwald and Pepper, 1971)

Respect for oneself implies not to let others who are capable put you into their service; to stand up for one's beliefs without getting into a fight, not abusing those who are weaker or younger, or punishing others for not accepting your ideas. To live as equals with our fellowman, we must cooperate with him. Cooperation in a democracy must be based on consideration for the other's rights and interests while standing up for one's own rights. This is the formula for equality; mutual respect is its premise.

Respect for each one's rights is the prerequisite for harmony, for a peaceful solution of conflicts. Reaching voluntary agreement requires total reorientation in our attitudes and approaches. The principle sounds simple enough, but its application is complex!

The prime prerequisite for a proper relationship implies expression of our respect in words and deeds, in the tone of voice, in the willingness to <u>listen</u>, and in our acceptance of other people's feelings. Showing respect implies being a good friend, not demanding; trust, not bribing, but earning friendship. We can respect others only if we respect ourselves and trust life only if we trust ourselves. Everyone has the <u>right</u> and the <u>obligation</u> to say what he thinks and also the <u>obligation</u>

to listen to what the others say, trying to understand what the other fellow feels and thinks.

As teachers we need training in cooperative techniques. We can become sensitive to the needs of others, to feel worthwhile, respected, and appreciated. We can learn to alleviate other's problems, not by words, but by action.

We must work for the general establishment and recognition of human dignity, mutual respect, and mutual assistance to truly have a "democratic society" and to truly assist the emotionally handicapped child.

Preparing for Group Discussions

In setting up group discussions with emotionally handicapped youngsters, if they are in a self-contained classroom, group discussions become a regular classroom activity. If the emotionally handicapped youngsters are in regular classes, they need to be scheduled to meet as a group. Regardless of how the group is formed, discussions should occur on a regularly scheduled basis, at least twice a week for 20-30 minutes.

If possible start with a small group of five youngsters and as they become trained in the cooperation , gradually add others to the group. The maximum size should be twelve to fifteen depending upon the severity of the behavior and their desire to participate.

As students are coming together, low soothing music helps set the tone. If time permits, a few relaxing exercises might prove helpful. Breath control and tension removing techniques often help to set the stage by slowing the pace. This is especially true if the meeting is right after lunch, following an outside activity or a confrontation with others.

The group should not be disturbed by other people entering and leaving during discussion time. The space should be large enough so the group can sit in chairs in a circle or on a rug with pillows, facing each other, yet not so large that it makes hearing difficult. The smaller room also helps to eliminate self-withdrawal or self-isolation.

A tape recorder would be helpful to record what decisions were reached and also to provide feedback to the group.

Preparing Emotionally Handicapped Students for Group Discussions

Emotionally handicapped youngsters should be prepared to participate in group discussions. They should know that:

1. Group discussion will help each member develop better interpersonal relationships that is, get along better with others and self.
2. Group discussion will help members to learn by sharing information and experiences with each other.
3. Group discussions will help members to develop problem solving skills which are needed for developing and maintaining a democratic way of life.
4. We are to focus on helping each other, not hurting each other.
5. We do not talk about our discussions to others. Discussions are confidential and group topics are not to be discussed outside the group. We learn to trust and respect confidentiality
6. We take turns in speaking and show respect for others right to disagree with us without becoming angry.

Such guidelines help to protect the rights of everyone and to prevent unfair members from interfering with the rights of others.

It often takes several meetings before most emotionally handicapped students can believe the premise and they will test you as the leader with all the strategies and techniques at their joint command. It is necessary at this time, for the leader to hang-in there and remain true. This is no technique for the faint of heart or the not trully dedicated--it will work but it will stretch your own courage and you must fight against discouragement.

You must remember that most emotionally handicapped youngsters are themselves deeply discouraged and view life as unfair and adults as taking advantage of them and making them do things they don't want to do, and adults as doing what they want to do. You may be the first one, or one of the very few who have said that you will respect them and treat them as your equal. From their private logic about adults and how they can find a place in this world, you have to be after something more devious. This is a scary concept, therefore they must fight this new idea, "group discussions" with all their might.

If you, the leader, can hold on and continue to show them respect and equality while still respecting yourself and have confidence in the group you will eventually see a more cooperative, trusting and exciting youth.

What Are The Purposes of Group Discussions

Using group discussion not only helps emotionally handicapped children to develop better interpersonal relationships but enhances learning through accumulated information. Effective communication of ideas leads to problem solving. Children learn through discussions to explore controversial matters and to deal with people of different backgrounds.

In a discussion group, emotionally handicapped children form attitudes and set values which may influence them for their whole life and may affect their behavior inside and outside of school. Group discussions provide opportunities for emotional and intellectual participation and a feeling of reassurance that one is not alone. Difficult tasks seem lighter when we have shared our ideas, aspirations, successes, problems, and anxieties. The emotionally handicapped child learns to evaluate and profit from another classmate's experience as well as from his own. He feels supported and becomes more responsive. He can learn constructive ways of handling frustrations and of working through upsetting problems. Through effectively directed group discussions the teacher may succeed in raising the morale of the group and change the atmosphere of the room. In this way, the learning process is facilitated by a common goal of all pupils. The teacher learns what each child feels and thinks, how he relates to others and what his attitude is toward school. For many children, talking in an atmosphere of mutual understanding stimulates thinking. As a child mulls over and talks about some problem, he may find a solution. In group discussions we have a class of children working on the same problem at the same time, and the results are usually good. Quite often the children will realize there are a number of solutions to the same problem.

These purposes or values of group discussions are achieved by exploring the feelings, the beliefs, doubts, fears, and concerns of those involved and by helping each member to gain an understanding

of and respect for each other by collectively solving the problems of the classroom. One task of group discussion is to stimulate each child to listen to the others.

Frequently, people do not listen to others who express different opinions. In the group discussion, everybody has the right to say what he thinks. Here everybody is equal and treated with respect. Children usually listen to others in such a setting.

Steve was a 13 year old emotionally handicapped youngster who used anger and fisticuffs to settle all his differences. On two occasions, we had attempted to discuss Steve's anger. Steve always stopped the group with the remark, "You know my anger is uncontrollable and has been since I was two."

One day, the class was having their discussion right after noon recess and when asked, "What would you like to discuss today?"-- Lyle replied, "I would like to talk about Steve's anger." Steve started to reply but Lyle said, "Now just wait a minute - I want to tell you what I noticed at lunch time." Lyle went on to relate that in playing Prison Ball, the rules were to hit from the waist down. A ball had been thrown and hit Steve on the side of the face. Steve snarled, doubled up his fists and smashed the player a couple of times. Both youngsters were side-lined for two minutes and then returned to the game. A few minutes later, Steve was hit again. He doubled up his fists and started toward the person that hit him. He noticed it was the teacher. Steve stopped, slowly dropped his fists, went back to his side and resumed playing. Lyle concluded his report, "Steve don't tell me you can't control your temper because I saw you."

As Lyle was recounting the incident, you could see the "light bulb" turning on in Steve's head. Steve then looked at the group and said, "I guess I can control my temper but I didn't know it -- I've always been told that I couldn't -- now -- come on you guys, help me so I won't have to act like that."

This discussion was a turning point in Steve accepting help and being willing to work towards making a change in his angry behavior.

We find that emotionally handicapped children would like to participate in group discussions but since they have never experienced friendly talking with others, they do not know how. They need help from the teacher and the other students.

The Role of the Teacher

A teacher cannot be a good leader unless she has inner freedom and she herself can admit that she made a mistake without feeling threatened by it. If teachers can accept being human, which means making occasional mistakes, her students will have an easier time to accept that making mistakes leads to learning.

The teacher cannot be passive if she wants to have effective group discussions. She must be directive, involved, and even manipulative. Since the purpose of group discussions is not only to change behavior but to change values, manipulation may sometimes be necessary.

Leadership Is "Sometimes Manipulation"

Without leadership, group discussions often turn into arguments centering on who is right and who is wrong or who did what. Nothing is accomplished in terms of insight and in terms of unification of

the class. As a result, the teacher becomes discouraged and discontinues group discussions. This is especially true when working with emotionally handicapped students.

To cite another example:

> In a high school alternative education school, I was working with a group of 5 to 7 potential delinquents in group discussions twice a week. After about ten weeks most of the students were fairly cooperative most of the time. Ronald would cooperate with no one, he was destructive, loud and a constant disruptive influence. I was becoming discouraged and would have given up on him except the two teachers of his other classes remarked on his behavioral improvement in class and in outside activities. One morning in group, he was swinging a football shoe around by the shoelace threatening anyone who came near him, while we continued our discussion. The shoe flew out of his hand and hit me in the shoulder. It hurt. There was complete silence, I picked up the shoe and handed it back to Ronald and continued with what I was doing. Ronald jumped up and started to cry, ran from the room saying, "I'm sorry". One of the students asked me what I was going to do now. I answered, "He'll be all right." The students then told me that kids were suspended for hitting teachers. I replied that it was an accident and he was truly sorry and very surprised that the shoe had hit me and I believed him. Another boy said, "Ron is my cousin and you know that is the first time I can ever remember seeing him either cry or say I'm sorry". The bell rang for the end of the period at this point. The next time we met Ron was there, was not so disruptive and became a more cooperative member of our discussion group.

We continued to have blow-ups, disagreements and non-cooperative behavior off and on but students were able to bring up real problems with the trust that we all would do our best to help give some suggestions for help in dealing with their problem.

Terry was 6 foot 3 inches and should have been on the basketball team but refused to go out for athletics. He was not accepted by the rest of the "macho" boys in our group or as a matter of fact, by any of the students in the school.

One morning Terry said, "I have a problem I'd like to discuss with the group". The group said it was okay but not very enthusiastically. Terry said that it took a lot of courage to bring this up but if we could help others, maybe we would all help him. "Since the sixth grade, I have been called a fag by everybody, my dad, teachers, and kids at school." There was a long pause in the group, then one boy asked him how it got started. Terry reported, "I was in the shower after a basketball game. One of the men teachers came into the locker room yelled at me and told me never to come to practice again and he didn't want to see me with any of the other boys unless a teacher was present. The teacher told the other boys to have nothing to do with me and to stay away from me. From then on, the teachers at school would never let me go any place unless a teacher was with me or the entire class as a group went someplace. If I had to go to the restroom during school time and had a lady teacher she would get a male teacher to go with me but I could not go alone. When my dad gets drunk he makes me sleep in the garage or out in the yard because no fag "is going to sleep in my house". I have

not had any friends or anybody to play with since the sixth grade and I often thought that death would be a better way out than the way I am living."

In our discussion we did not talk about the homosexuality problem, if any, but on the overt behavior of Terry, and the behavior of other people. Terry's reputation had followed him into high school and all of the boys had heard about it and acted as if he were tainted. In fact, they had never talked with him or included him in any activities. Some boys stated that they had tried to get out of this group when they found that Terry was included, but their regular teachers wouldn't let them and told them to discuss the problem with me in the group. This they found different because once I'd said that gossip didn't deserve much consideration and was a waste of valuable time. They had not been able to come up with any information that they thought I would consider facts. So instead had decided to stay in the discussion group and not mention their dilemma with Terry.

After this Terry was included in some of their activities, talked and traveled to classes and lunch with them. Two of the boys saw to it that he was not made fun of by others who teased him and called him names in their presence. Terry was not the loner to the extent that he had been prior to this discussion.

The group discussions can be compared to the conference table where teachers and students confront each other and where they come to agreements. The group becomes the exploring agent into what causes friction and how it can be avoided or solved

when it occurs. The spirit of competition becomes one of mutual sympathy and concern. The child that is often subject to ridicule becomes a challenge to be helped.

During group discussions, it is preferable for the group to be seated in a circle. The discussion is usually opened with, "What would you like to talk about today?" If the youngsters do not bring up a problem or a topic, the teacher may bring up a problem she wishes to discuss. It is important to focus on understanding behavior and what motivates one to act as one does. The teacher needs to pose questions such as "What can we do to help Jesse so he won't get into fights?" "What else could he do?"

Asking the right question is probably the most difficult technique in leading group discussions. Many teachers ask how one can learn this. There is no prescribed way of learning how to pose questions except do it and learn from mistakes, successes, and experiences. Try not to ask questions that can be answered in a single word. Ask questions that need some thinking involved in the answer.

PRIVATE LOGIC

The questions and principles developed in the following material can be effectively and responsibly applied during group discussions with emotionally handicapped youngsters. We need to understand the concept of "Private Logic." The term "Private Logic" was somewhat ambiguously used by Alfred

Adler as being interchangeable with such terms a "private intelligence", "private world", "personal intelligence" and others. The term was used in opposition to "common sense". Common sense is used by an individual when one has a highly developed sense of social interest, is task oriented and is in tune with others in his environment. Dreikurs (1973) said, "The normal socially adjusted person acts in line with reason and logic." Private logic or private intelligence is a "mistaken reason" in which an individual solves his problems in a self-centered, private sense that other people usually do not understand. Dreikurs also said, "Everybody acts in accordance with his convictions, although he may not be aware of his inner Logic, Common sense, the knowledge of good or bad, conscience and conscienceness, may describe one pattern or action; but the child often does not act in accordance with his own "better knowledge." He cannot "control" himself because he does not know his own private logic." The teacher trained in these concepts can recognize faulty attitudes and deal with them (Dreikurs 1968).

Private logic involves a process, beginning in childhood, where experiences are explained to oneself with varying degrees of insight and which allows that person to produce and justify his behavior. In this light, an individual's private logic may be seen to reflect that person's degree of social interest and adjustment or the degree of emotional disturbance.

Life Style

While generalizations, concepts and ideas about life are all fictions necessary to guide an individual through the world, some

goals are more productive or constructive and reflect a better sense of adjustment than others. But the life style always represents a generalization, a broad goal, the beliefs a person holds with respect to the condition under which he can have a place.

A common example of emotional disturbance finds individuals striving to "belong" only through attaining personal significance by achieving power and superiority over others. They are supported by the mistaken assumption that individuals are worthless and insignificant unless they are superior. Power and superiority are not necessarily sought without social interest. But when a person has a sense of belonging as he is, he acts on the basis of his social interest rather than the need for personal superiority. Problems from a mistaken goal develop when a specific life style prevents a person from meeting the demands of a particular situation, limiting the feelings of belonging. When the guidelines an individual has set for himself are primarily in line with a desire for superiority, that is, "I'm no good unless I'm superior," then he experiences a constant threat or failure and defeat, and may strive to control every situation, even at the expense of cooperation or effectiveness.

Immediate Goals

While the life style represents broad life goals, there are also partial or preliminary sub-goals which can be seen operating in relationships and particular situations. These immediate goals are derived from the life goals. The four mistaken goals of children - attention, power, revenge, withdrawal --are examples of such sub-goals for immediate situations.

Hidden Reasons

Another psychological process of private logic concerns the rationale used to justify a particular behavior. The result of the rationalization can be considered as the "hidden reason" for a person's behavior which might be considered unusual (Dreikurs, 1973). As with the life style and the immediate goals, an individual is unaware of his reasons for doing or saying something until the reasons are pointed out in terms of exactly what was in his mind at the time. The hidden reasons for behavior are not concerned with the psychological explanations of goals. Rather they are the words of "logic" used by an individual to operationally conceptualize his private logic.

Techniques for Psychological Disclosure

One of the most important foundations of the nature of private logic is that the individual's goals and reasons are hidden and unconscious. What people need to know, if they wish to improve their functioning, is their intentions and goals. When a person is made aware of his goals, he then has an opportunity to review them and to seek alternatives which are better suited to solve his problems. (Dreikurs, 1973)

An individual's immediate goals for relationships and situations exist in the form of schematized behaviors occurring in the presence of the target person or problem situation. The techniques for identifying the goals are:

1. Confronting the behaviors and situations in terms of their problematical nature.
2. Identifying the individual's goals using the procedure of guessing.

When the correct guess has been made, we will see a "recognition reflex", usually a knowing smile, a twinkle in the eye or an unusual behavior of some sort.

In the process of confronting and guessing goals, one first asks why the child misbehaves. We know that the child does not know the reason, and therefore, will either say he doesn't know or give a rationalization. But this question is necessary as a preparation for the next statements. "I will tell you what I think." The goal is presented as a hypothesis in the form "Could it be that..." followed by a reference to the specific goal. Some examples following the four goals of misbehavior are:

ATTENTION

Could it be that:

You want to keep me busy with you?

You want me to do more for you?

You want me to help you more?

POWER

Could it be that:

You want to show me that you can do what you want

--that I can't stop you?

--that I (he, she) can't make you?

REVENGE

Could it be that:

You want to get even? get back at _____?

You want to show me how much you hated what I did?

You want to show them that they can't get away with that?

You want to hurt me and the pupils in the class?

DISPLAY OF INADEQUACY (Withdrawal)

Could it be that:

You want to be left alone because you cannot do anything? ("I must be dumb.")

You feel like you don't know the answer and you don't want people to know?

We must be careful not to confront the youngster with an accusation as the youngster will resent it and deny it. "Could it be" is no accusation--it is only a guess---which may be correct or incorrect. If it is incorrect, we guess again.

The hidden reasons an individual uses to justify unusual behaviors are conceived in the form of a rationalization. The techniques used to identify the reasons are those of confronting the behavior, i.e., identifying an actual behavior in terms of its' unusual nature, and then guessing the individual's exact thoughts used in rationalizing the behavior. It is important to guess the exact words the emotionally handicapped youngster uses in his own mind in order to understand him as well as to convey the feeling that he is understood. The process of guessing thoughts is a simple one involving continued guessing until the answer is found. In hidden reason-wrong guesses result in a flat "no" if you are way off or in "not exactly" if you are in the ball park. If the right guess cannot be made, we wait until another occasion of a specific behavior which may be confronted and the hidden reason be guessed.

The individual's reaction to disclosure of hidden reasons in terms of the exact thoughts is usually one of ready, almost instant agreement.

Frank, a senior was a very bright student, however, he performed on a less than average basis. The teacher confronted him with the possible reason for underachievement as:

"Frank, could it be that you want to be the poorest student in the class?" Frank, "No". Teacher, "Could it be that you want to show me that you don't have to do your work?" Frank, "Well-- no that's really not it." Teacher, "Could it be that you use not doing good work at school or not doing as well as you could- as a way to get even with your parents?" Frank, looking a little surprised, said "Yeah, I'm mad at them."

The hidden reason may be disclosed in a manner similar to the disclosure of the Four Goals but with the use of different questions, such as:

Could it be that:

1. you feel that you are trying your best and people show no appreciation?
2. you feel superior to me when you put me into a position where I don't know what to do with you, and I feel helpless?
3. you are not talking in order to frustrate me (and others) and make me feel helpless and defeated?

The recognition reflex and the adult's own reaction are still the best guide to an understanding of the child's goal. But this is only true for the young child. While each of the four mistaken goals are observable at any age level, during adolescence other

goals lend themselves as a means to find a place in a peer group. In order to understand youth, one can no longer rely on the four mistaken goals exclusively as observed in young children. We must take into consideration the power and excitement of the peer group when dealing with adolescents. With young children, the recognition of the child's immediate goals is all the teacher needs to know, as they, at that age, represent the child's private logic. With teenagers, the teachers need to know the "hidden reasons".

Finally, having identified and disclosed a child's goals, one should never blame the child for the goals nor refer to them during regular activities. Goals should be discussed only at the proper time, either in a personal talk or in the weekly group discussion.

QUALITIES NEEDED FOR LEADERS OF GROUP DISCUSSION

To be a leader of a group discussion requires considerable self-assurance, spontaneity and inner freedom. These qualities permit a teacher to function without fear, without concern for her own prestige or distrust of what the children may say. The teacher must know how to draw the children out and to help them feel free and unthreatened to discuss their feelings and their ideas. It is a subtle leadership. We must also remember that our group discussions are used for psychological and corrective purposes. It helps the children understand what makes them tick; why they have problems, and what they can do to solve them.

Classroom discussions can counteract delinquent tendencies, not to mention the general improvement in both the commitment to learning and to behaving in a more appropriate manner by the emotionally disturbed child.

REFERENCES

Bates, Marilyn, and Johnson, Clarence D.; Group Leadership; Denver, Colorado 80222, Lane Publishing Company; 1972.

Dinkmeyer, Don C. & Muro, James J., Group Counseling, F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc. 1971.

Dreikurs, Rudolf, Psychology in the Classroom, Harper & Row, Inc., New York 1957.

Gazda, George M.; Group Counseling; Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1971.

Lindgren, H.C., Educational Psychology in the Classroom, Wiley & Sons, New York 1956.

Ohlsen, Merle M., Counseling Children in Groups, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., New York 1973.

Sweeney, Thomas J.; Adlerian Counseling; Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company 1975.

Dreikurs, Rudolf, Grunwald, Bronia, Pepper, Floy C.; Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom; Harper & Row, New York, New York.